

AUTOMATIC WATER METER READING SYSTEM INSTALLATION

The digital automated water meter reading system (AMRS) currently being installed are a major improvement over the present water meters and process. This new system offers substantial savings for the city in the cost of meter reading and bill production. Once all new meters are installed, every customer in the city will have an accurate meter.

Before AMRS, three public works employees spent two to three days reading 530 meters. Approximately sixty hours were involved, including gas and labor time the total cost of this process was approximately \$1,610 per month.

All 530 existing meters are the old dial type and about 15-20 years old. After about 10 years, this type of meter becomes inaccurate. Although the general perception is that a meter over-reads, most often an older meter will undercount the water actually consumed. However, with these new meters the reading will be accurate.

Our AMRS is a meter with a signal unit built into the meter that sends a water consumption count to a cellular telephone tower, and then the signal is relayed to City Hall. On the 20th of each month, the Utility Clerk will press a button on her computer that instantly completes the meter reading process, taking about five seconds.

Having this new system and meter will assure the customer has an accurate reading. The signal that is sent from the meter is continuous, allowing slow leaks or major leaks to be more easily found by public works employees, or consumers (see next paragraph). These prompt readings can help you with your budgeting and water conservation efforts and will also identify high consumption dates and times, such as filling a swimming pool during a billing cycle, thus providing information to the customer on unusual high billings.

A great advantage of this new system is the ability to place an "app" on your smartphone or home computer that enables continuous private information about your water usage. This information will only be available to the account holder. In late February, after the meter installation is complete,, the City will host afternoon and an evening public training sessions, focusing on how to use the app and the information that it generates. This information will also be available on the City's website in late February. The information/training sessions will be February 25th at 3:00p.m. and 5:00 p.m. and at 7:00 p.m. All three sessions will be at the City Hall at 101 Old Plantersville Road.

The total cost of the system is about \$130,000 which includes new meters for the entire city (which have a 20-year warranty), installation of the meters and billing software. Using a conservative estimate of \$1,610 per month savings, the AMRS will pay for itself after 6.5 years. In addition to the cost savings for the City, consumers will have information that will allow them to monitor their water usage real-time and anticipate bills which will be particularly valuable during the summer months.

If you have any questions prior to the public meetings, please feel free to contact Ashley Slaughter, the Utility Clerk, at 936-597-6434 or myself at 936-597-6463.

Jack Yates, City Administrator

